certain things which have also been circulated to the State Governments for implementation.

SHRI B. J. PANDA: Sir, the statement furnished by the hon. Minister in respect of Question No. 21 and 28 very substantially answers the questions that I had raised. I would just like to express my satisfaction for Rs. 107 crores earmarked for Orissa; and I have no further supplementary.

Dialogue with Elected Representatives to Resolve Kashmir Issue

*22. DR. KARAN SINGH: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Union Government is of the view that there is need for a dialogue with the elected representatives and the separatist groups to resolve the Kashmir issue;

(b) if so, whether any steps have been taken or being taken in this regard; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, INCHARGE OF THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI L. K. ADVANI): (a) to (c) The Prime Minister in his address to the nation from the ramparts of Red Fort on August 15,2002 had announced the resolve of the present Government at the Centre to initiate a dialogue with the elected representatives and other organizations in the State. Besides, as a matter of policy the Government continues to keep its doors open for talks with any groups or sections within J and K who eschew the path of violence.

DR. KARAN SINGH: Mr. Chairman has kindly allowed me to put this Question in the unavoidable absence of Shri Ghulam Nabi Azad. Sir, I am grateful to you for the courtesy in allowing me to put this question in the unavoidable absence of Shri Ghulam Nabi Azad.

Sir, Jammu and Kashmir has had a troubled history since 1947; I do not have to repeat that. The last 13 years of aggressive militancy have been full of disaster, destruction and death. Sir, the elections in September-October, 2002 provided a new window of opportunity. The Prime Minister made a commitment from the ramparts of the Red Fort, which the hon. Minister has mentioned, that they would initiate dialogue with the elected representatives of the people and other organisations. Four-and-a-half months have elapsed since those elections but there seems to be no move yet, as far as we are aware, of initiating this important set of dialogue.

Would the hon. Minister be pleased to state whether the Government is resiling from its publicly proclaimed position that they are going to initiate a dialogue with the elected representatives and other organisations from the various regions of the State and even, perhaps, those organisations which were not involved in the elections? If not, what concrete steps the Government intend to take in this connection, and when will this process start?

SHRI L. K. ADVANI: Sir, there is no question of the Government resiling from its commitment. In fact, I have reiterated it today. I thought -- this question having been posed by Shri Ghulam Nabi Azad -- and you have kindly allowed Dr. Karan Singh to put it -- both of them are eminent representatives of that State -- I would avail of this occasion to say that consultations have been going on. In the process of consultations, I had indicated to the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, right since his election, that in this matter, we would like to have his guidance also. The Government has decided to nominate Shri N. N. Vohra, former Home Secretary of the Government of India to carry on with these consultations. I have discussed the matter even with the Chief Minister, who has welcomed the proposal. How and when the whole process would start, would depend upon Mr. Vohra's discussions with the people concerned.

DR. KARAN SINGH: Mr. Chairman, Sir, this is news to us that a new person has been nominated. There have been several people earlier who were called upon to do this. First of all, Shri K. C. Pant was asked to do it; he had a Ministerial status. Then, Shri Arun Jaitley was asked to do it. My good friend, Shri Ram Jethmalani has taken his own initiative. Now, we come to Mr. Vohra. He is a very able civil servant. May I suggest that this dialogue really has to take place at political level; and unless the highest political level is involved in Delhi, merely getting an interlocutor, howsoever able and competent he may be, is not going to solve the problem. I am making a suggestion that this should be upgraded to the political level. I spoke to the Chief Minister this morning, and there does not seem to be any view there that the process has started. So, the earlier this dialogue begins, I think, the better it will be for democracy and for the national interest.

SHRI L. K. ADVANI: I agree that process should be expedited. All that I can is that the person chosen for the job is highly suited for it. And

the Chief Minister himself said, that is a good name, it is a welcome name. But the decisions would have to be taken at the political level

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question has been well replied. I think I should take up the next question. ... *(Interruptions)*...

SHRI RAM JETHMALANI: Sir, I have only one question. ...*(Interruptions)*..

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you so much interested? ...*(Interruptions)*..

SHRI RAM JETHMALANI: Sir, I am very much interested. ...*(Interruptions)*.. Frankly, I must say that I have never seen ...*(Interruptions)*.. Sir, I want to point out that only yesterday, only yesterday, Mr. Soz who is a representative of that State and who is a Member of this House, made a Special Mention in which he said that the people of Jammu and Kashmir are frustrated and disappointed that no dialogue has started till today. Only about ten days back, Mr. Mufti Mohammand Sayeed at a Press Club interview very angrily asked that you are talking to Nagas, why you are not talking to the Kashmiri people. After that there may have been some dialogue with Mr. Mufti Mohammad Sayeed to keep him silent. But this does not answer the wishes and aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. And that answer given to the question is most unhelpful. The question is, do you today realise that a dialogue is necessary? To that the answer is that on 15th August, 2002, the Prime Minister had said something, like that. Do you today feel that this dialogue is absolutely imperative? What are the steps that you have taken to ensure this dialogue till today?

SHRI L. K. ADVANI: Mr. Chairman, Sir, we have all along felt that a dialogue is necessary. There have been certain difficulties. And then when the elections were due, we were keen to see that the elections were free and fair and the new representatives who would come there, we would start a dialogue with them. The process of consultations has taken some time. But having announced that the person who is to carry on this dialogue has been identified. The State Government, the Chief Minister has also welcomed his name. I do not think there should be any point of taking exception. I think it would be welcomeed by the whole of the Jammu and Kashmir and the dialogue will proceed. And whatever suggestions would come that would be implemented.